

RESOURCES OF NEW ZEALAND RESEARCH MATERIAL IN THE NEXT TEN YEARS

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As part of what I understand to be the theme of this Conference, namely New Zealand library needs and tasks during the decade, there has been no serious objection to the suggestion that in order to provide some basis for discussion in this session I should say a little about our resources of New Zealand research material during the next 10 years. Superficially this might appear to some a quite unnecessary task; we have after all fairly extensive resources of New Zealand material, apart from the fact that to some they appear to be largely locked up in certain libraries in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch or Dunedin; we are much more aware of our lack of overseas materials in the general fields of knowledge. The New Zealand field will look after itself. The fact that it does somehow tend to look after itself is perhaps the measure of its importance. While in a country the size of New Zealand the number of research workers who are, for example, vocal about the shortage of material on Chinese painting of the Ming dynasty, growing avocados or building a nuclear reactor, is limited, many individuals, organisations, even Government Departments are concerned about the history of Nelson, fungicide infestation of *Pinus radiata*, or Maori-European relations.

But first of all, what do we mean by resources? We are considering resources not merely in the sense of their acquisition but of their organisation and recording—it is not sufficient merely to have something, it has to be available for the degree of use which is appropriate to the institution housing it. The primary purpose may be to preserve the book or document and not to wear it out but in this discussion we are considering basically availability and use.

Again, whose resources? There are two aspects of this: the resources of the country as a whole in which it may be acceptable, or necessarily acceptable, if one copy or set is held, and secondly the resources of individual libraries. In the rather precarious affluence which some libraries might, relatively speaking, be trapped into ad-

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mitting that they have enjoyed for a brief period, we have perhaps heard a little less about the first aspect, the one copy theory, and much more about the latter, the necessity for local duplication to meet specific needs. Perhaps surprisingly this question arises in the New Zealand context where a great deal of potential research material is unique and where many books are known only by a few surviving copies. At the moment, whatever we may think of the last 10 years, the next 10 do not look too promising; a prudent stock-taking and equally careful and prudent planning is essential. We may have to struggle to hold our ground on what we have achieved. So what have we done with the last 10 years?

Acquisition-wise it would be nice to claim that nationally we have been able to get everything of specifically New Zealand interest we have needed. A close study of even Bethune's records during the period would show that this has not been so; perhaps in the minor instances what has been passed up has been considered dear at the price. However, this has often not been the case and the fact that several of us were glad to aid the passage of a Historical Articles Act prohibiting the export of certain unique items from New Zealand shows among other things that we did not feel that our resources, unaided, would ensure that such items would be held and sold in New Zealand. So far as items dealing exclusively with New Zealand in overseas catalogues are concerned, the situation has been and still is precarious. The National Library during the past eight months has been able to ensure that Turnbull would not miss out but I can readily foresee circumstances and collections which could still cause financial embarrassment. But when we come to Pacific material in which we are interested with other New Zealand libraries we have to admit that nationally and individually we are in a world market in which our resources are not keeping pace. Members may recall the noted Cook auction at which a particular Cook log sold for five times what the collective efforts of Turnbull and the Mitchell could raise, the sale price being the National Library Service's total book vote not so many years ago.

And within New Zealand we have long since reached the stage at which we admit by default that no one library gets everything published in New Zealand. Clearly the National Library—General Assembly Library and Alexander Turnbull Library—should and does get more than any other library, but there are certain minor categories of local serials and ephemera which it does not collect as part of current acquisition policy. As I suggested some 15 years ago, this is quite right and proper provided some local responsibility is accepted regionally in Auckland, Christchurch and Dunedin and further down in the local collection level.

Comparisons are invidious and one does not have the full facts on which to base judgment, but I would think that during the past 10 years in acquisition, some university and a few public libraries

have perhaps been able to obtain a wider range of New Zealand material than hitherto but that major New Zealand collections other than those associated with the National Library have not been able to improve their position where cash outlay other than actual donation is involved. This inference if correct does seem to carry some implicit limitation on the scale of collecting in such libraries and I am thinking specifically of the collections in the Auckland Museum, Auckland Public Library, Canterbury Museum and Hocken Library.

But at the resources level there have been some gains. Thanks to the Australian Joint Copying Project, the National Archives and Turnbull Library have microfilms. The fact that these are positive microfilms which some universities now feel should exist in copy form also in the university raises some problems for the past and future which we have to resolve, but the point is that for a fairly minimal travel expenditure within New Zealand the material copied can be found. There is much more overseas still to be copied when it has been identified and I feel very strongly that it is the responsibility and duty of the National Library to do this, with the assistance of a London-based liaison officer.

When we come to cataloguing and bibliographical controls, the picture is equally uneven. In cataloguing we are doing things very much as 10 years ago; development has been less rapid here than in any other field and I would guess that in 10 years' time we shall, because of lack of hardware and wherewithal, be still doing our cataloguing in very much the same way. But within the National Library family we are concerned that we even have to consider the possibility of providing space for a card catalogue of 4,000,000 cards apart from the National Union Catalogue.

Bibliographically, as has been pointed out in various contexts, much has been accomplished although the major projects have taken longer than a decade to get to the point of effective use. The National Union Catalogue began in 1941, the retrospective section in 1949, and it is still not completed although very rapid progress has been made during the last two years thanks to the use of Xerox Copy-flo. It took 16 years to get to the first edition of the *Union List of Serials* and it will probably be an exact 30 to the completion of the second this year. Having regard to the staffing and accommodation available, I do not see that either of these important projects could have been pushed through more rapidly. The retrospective National Bibliography was commenced in 1948 but made little real progress until 1955 from when it took very nearly the decade to produce the check-list; it will take another decade to complete publication allowing for the fact that most of the real work on the pre-1890 section has still to be done.

Coincidentally, the New Zealand Seminar itself began some 10 years ago largely on the initiative of Mr Frank Rogers, now at the University of New England. Particularly in the early years it filled a place and some of its sessions were regarded as ones in which those

concerned could really get to grips with a problem. However, I would like to question whether the narrower technical aims of the Seminar could not be better met on the one hand by a specialised seminar for those directly concerned, such as Monday's Map Seminar, and on the other, whether its retention does not deflect an excessive parochialism. The Australians have nothing like it and it would be amusing to speculate on the character and nature of an L.A. or A.L.A. session for the librarians of British and American collections respectively. We are all concerned with New Zealand books and bibliographical services. If we think we are not, then perhaps some supreme arbitrators should examine our professional competence to hold our positions. At the L.A.A. 1965 Conference which I attended there were at least three papers which in New Zealand would have been relegated by a programme committee to this Seminar. These were, however, ordinary sessions like 40 others.

The Seminar, administratively, has no continuity or constitutionally delegated task. In the past the Bibliographical Sub-Committee of the Library Resources Committee and the parent committee itself have been responsible for policy recommendations in the area of the Committee, as has the Archives Committee (when it has met). In the future there will be the Library Resources Committee of the Association, which presumably will still wish to retain some interest in aspects of this field, and the National Library Trustees Resources Committee, a committee of librarians which had its first meeting last December. I am proposing that major papers should be part of the Conference programme and that more technical matters should be dealt with in a study seminar.

However, before doing this perhaps we should consider what institutionally, individually, and as Association members, we should do to extend our resources in the New Zealand field and to provide the approach to them.

Our first aim is to continue what we have started and, where desirable, to complete it. This may seem so obvious as scarcely to warrant comment. But at this time it would be a mistake to take the continued existence of the projects I have mentioned for granted, least of all because the National Library has been established. It might be thought, for example, that any project which had struggled through 17 or 20 years in the National Library Centre would henceforth be assured of existence in perpetuity if necessary. Probably so, but it should not be assumed. Some of you will have seen a recent announcement that the B.N.B. is about to take over a five-storey building of 18,000 square feet. If we assume that the B.N.B. deals approximately with 25,000 titles and that there are some 1,000 in the current *New Zealand National Bibliography*, then one twenty-fifth of the space or 720 square feet might be considered. One-tenth of that area would be nearer the mark, while as is well known, we have not yet been able to find the space in the Turnbull building to bring over the

retrospective National Bibliography, although we are hopeful that some way round this difficulty can be found.

Similarly, in the first painful exercise in rationalisation in which the National Library has indulged, the merging of *Copyright Publications*, *Copyright List* and *Current National Bibliography*, we hope and, speaking at least for myself, we shall do all we can to ensure that the new publication *New Zealand National Bibliography* is a worthy successor of the combined efforts of the past. But whatever has been said of the duplication in this area, it did have some of the compensations of competition and, so far as coverage was concerned, I feel sure that it has been covered better during the past 10 years as a combined effort than it was before or—dare I say it—than it might be in the future. In plain language, rationalisation is not alone the ultimate answer and on this precise point of coverage the question could well be asked how finely should we drag the net nationally as distinct from regionally, particularly in the marginal areas of local serial publications and ephemera.

RATIONALISATION OF COLLECTING

The fact that five major New Zealand collections in the four centres together with a growing number of provincial museums are all in competition for the relatively meagre records of New Zealand's 125 years of history, and the still limited literacy of its 2½ million people, is a matter which causes me some concern. You may be unconvinced by the statement that this concern existed before I took up my appointment with what is possibly the major competitor in this field. I have said earlier that competition within limits was a good thing and this applies also in the records and manuscripts fields. Some years ago the possibility of local collections with a limited amount of material of this kind was discussed in an article in *New Zealand Libraries* but certain minimal limits were proposed. In favour of a more unbridled development are two factors, firstly the claim that material will be given to a local repository where it can readily be seen by those interested in records of the community's activities, rather than to a national institution probably some distance away. I am not altogether convinced about the validity of this argument although it is difficult, naturally, to disprove such claims. The second point—and this is a much more valid one—is that regardless of any attempt by any group of institutions to define areas and scope—and the subheading of this section suggests that a formal attempt by institutions to limit their fields might be made—individuals will naturally exercise their democratic and, in this field, highly personal right to give family records to the institution of their choice. This is a situation we have to live with and nothing can or should be done to change this pattern. However, as against the growing interest of provincial museums in this field must be set firstly the fact that many of these institutions are unlikely to be able to service the material adequately; and secondly, as I have so often seen, what is collected

is only a fragment or a section of what is already in some other institution elsewhere. Thirdly, it is clear that what any provincial institutions can now collect by the most vigorous and active policy can only be a small proportion of what is already in the National Archives and in the national New Zealand collections. In other words, the manuscript assembled cannot be a useful body of research material but only a series of museum examples of the kind of record once kept. It is easy to say that scholars are long suffering, can get funds to travel, don't mind travelling and don't mind where the material is so long as they can get at it. This has never been my own view as a researcher and I am sure from my experience at Turnbull that this is not true of others. One major method for the redistribution of our material is clearly by photocopying. Already, the meeting of photocopying requirements is becoming a major responsibility, if not, with our limited technical resources, something of a burden. Despite what we are already doing we tend, I think, to speak a little too loosely about the possibilities of an early major exchange policy with the aid of this method. This clearly will come in time. It is a development which is logical and reasonable but clearly it will take time and resources to organise and I do think that the resources should be those of the local authority concerned and not necessarily those of the central Government. To a certain extent much could be done on an exchange basis, and in fact has been operating on a small scale for some time. There is material, for example, in every library and museum in the country which we would like copies of for the national collection. Correspondingly we have a varying amount which deals with the areas served by provincial institutions. But beyond the basis of any equitable exchange there is a vast amount of material, particularly in the National Archives, which is essential to the study of local history. Perhaps we are making too much of this, and we should develop the Canadian policy where the National Library takes copies of certain material both for itself and the local library interested. In the larger countries overseas the practice of travel to the national and provincial repositories by scholars is fairly generally accepted. In New Zealand in the library field we have prided ourselves on perhaps being a little in advance of the rest of the world in taking materials to the readers. This is a good thing which can in moderation be extended to the area of primary sources, but there are essential limitations to what can and should be done in this way. Certain collections from their nature and youth, together of course with the terms of deposit, preclude a general exchange. Many of us, too, in the National Library and in the National Archives are convinced of the advantage both to the research worker as well as to the institution of his doing a considerable part of his research, or at least initiating his research, in person in the institution instead of firing off a series of rocket-like requests for photo-copies. There are few research fields for which a trained and informed staff cannot supply background ancillary information and sources which they come across

by systematic search or serendipity. This is done much more effectively and naturally for one who has honoured the institution with his presence and made his specific wants known.

DUPLICATION OF BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS

A trend of the last 25 years of which I was aware from my experience in the National Library Centre as well as a personal book user, but which was brought home to me quite strikingly on my return to Turnbull, was manifest in the wear and tear on a great many much-used New Zealand and Pacific books. A superficial examination of the shelves has shown that already, of a number of rare titles, the Library has no copy in the original binding. Many of those which have been rebound may not stand being rebound a second time. How much more serious from a consumer's point of view is, for example, the plight of the newer universities and other libraries who need to build up a basic New Zealand collection. A great many of the items wanted are in the rare book category. Clearly we have to make our own New Zealand version of the South Australian reprint programme if this situation is to be arrested and these titles are to become in any way more readily available. This is a matter which we intend to get going systematically this year. I cannot give details because I have not yet discussed all possibilities with the publishing and printing authorities concerned. It does, however, seem to be a National Library responsibility to give a lead in this direction.

MANUSCRIPT MAPS AND MAPS NOT PART OF SERIES

In view of the Map Seminar on Monday last any relatively uninformed comments such as mine should be kept to a minimum. However, as a user of maps I have long been impressed with the need for some accessible national inventory down to 1900 of manuscript maps and maps issued other than as a series. As far as I am aware the project carried through under the auspices of the Canterbury Branch of the New Zealand Geographical Society some years ago in listing all known maps dealing with Canterbury is still the only one of this kind to have been brought to a conclusion. I would hope that nationally as well as regionally during the next decade, in co-operation with the Department of Lands and Survey, the largest holders of such maps, that a national inventory or union catalogue of our holdings on the above lines could be completed.

MANUSCRIPTS

Something has been said above about the relative advantages of national or local acquisition of manuscript material. Clearly, however, we all need to do more than we have yet been able to do to step up our acquisition of manuscripts and to undertake more systematic ways of tapping likely sources. One of the most striking features of any large manuscript collection is the relative poverty of any library's holdings for the last 80 years. We are all able to add from time to time to our holdings of material through the Maori War period—it is surprising how such letters and journals still manage to turn up—

but there is a dearth of material for the modern period. Several reasons for this will occur to you but it is not a situation which I think is likely to improve, simply because the material has not been kept or has been lost. That is why as part of our general programme more positive and continuing guidance and public urging needs to be given on this matter. Bibliographically we continue with our Union Catalogue of Manuscripts. It is a question for future consideration whether the rules of entry should not be amended to require fuller description and annotation of the contents on the lines of the Australian Union Catalogue. The work done on Turnbull's own manuscript catalogue permits a form of entry similar to the Australian one with a minimum of additional work, but the much simpler reporting required for the Union Catalogue of Manuscripts will not allow this to be done without referring back most of the entries to the libraries concerned.

ART MATERIAL AND PHOTOGRAPHS

Here in the short term each library continues to struggle on independently as best as it can. We have in the past exchanged views on our respective techniques and methods of classification at this Seminar, as well as privately, and I would hope that we would continue to do this. The only project which calls for comment is the topographical index commenced many years ago by the Auckland Gallery but now I understand, virtually in abeyance. It is most desirable that some means be found to give new impetus to this project and that the cooperation of participating libraries be obtained as well as some support for adequate editorship. This is a policy matter for discussion, probably in another place by an appropriate committee and perhaps even with the Art Galleries and Museums Association of New Zealand. The main point is that the work should be pressed ahead with.

ANALYSIS OF MATERIAL

The final point which I wish to make this afternoon relates to the need to record fully what we have. I tried to make this point 12 months ago at the Auckland Conference in a discussion of the future of the catalogue, in which the view was put forward that we need to strip down and simplify as far as we can our cataloguing procedures which are primarily intended to identify a book and to enable it to be found on the shelves. The much more important task is that of recording and indexing the contents of potential research material in the New Zealand field. Some of you may feel, as clearly do many overseas libraries, that basically this is not the library's task; provided our major holdings are recorded in the catalogue and may be found by the staff, what is in them is a matter for the research worker and not for the librarian. This, I think, is a somewhat short-sighted view, one which can be compared to the function of librarianship as seen in the later stages of monastic libraries and chained books.

Libraries which hold a range of manuscript material do have, I think, an obligation not merely to include it in the Union Catalogue of Manuscripts but to prepare at least outline inventories of its contents. To me this is an essential part of the duties and responsibilities of such custody. Again, to save wear and tear on materials, to enable more answers to recurring questions to be given, we need to press on vigorously with the various indexing procedures and projects which we have talked about so often in the last decade but on which so little real progress has been made. In this respect I am glad to say that the Turnbull Library is at last about to start indexing the Wellington Provincial Council *Acts* and *Proceedings* but, as you are aware, this is one of a number of such projects we have discussed in other years.

In these rather scattered notes I have touched upon a number of important, even controversial, topics. In conclusion I would say only that we must ensure that we are able to continue on the lines of work we have commenced.



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